

# Foundations

BUILDING EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH CARE



WICKED

ADVANCEMENTS IN  
SURGICAL EXCELLENCE

**VIRTUAL REALITY**

Cycling through Dialysis

**FIVE YEARS OF JOANNA'S HOUSE**

Here we grow again

**DIABETES CARE FOR KIDS**

Texting program builds connections

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We humbly recognize and acknowledge that Kelowna General Hospital (KGH) and the KGH Foundation operate on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the syilx people.

Cover Image: KGH Surgeons Dr. Maurice Blitz, Chief of Surgery, Thoracic and Foregut Surgeon (left) and Dr. Joshua Wiesenthal, Head of Urology (right). See story on page 4.



**Allison (Allie) Young**  
Chief Executive Officer  
KGH Foundation

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

# *WICKED* ADVANCEMENTS IN HEALTH CARE

I hope you will permit us to have a little fun in this issue of Foundations. Afterall, as I write this, it's another predictably grey winter day here in the Okanagan and well, we could all use a little levity at this time of year.

Clearly, folks around the KGH Foundation office were inspired by the box-office smash that was *Wicked*. I get it. The story of *Wicked* teaches us that transformation begins with challenging perspectives, embracing resilience, and forging new paths. These themes resonate deeply with the mission of the KGH Foundation, where we are reimagining what is possible in health care for the Interior of British Columbia.

In this issue of Foundations, you will learn more about the wicked advancements in surgical excellence that are on the horizon for KGH. "You have to make your own destiny," says Elphaba in the movie. I'm so grateful to surgeons like Dr. Wiesenthal and Dr. Blitz, who continue to advocate for excellence for their patients. And, say 'yes' even to the wildest ideas for a cover image.

Also in this issue, you will learn how your gifts are enabling wicked advancements in technologies to help transform diabetes care for some of our littlest patients, and the uplifting impact that adventures in virtual reality are having on people managing weekly dialysis appointments.

When it comes to health care, there's truly no place like home. And for more and more families than ever, there's truly no place like JoeAnna's House. It's hard to believe it's been five years already. And here we grow again.

Elphaba's journey is a testament to staying true to your principles, and standing up for what you believe in, even in the face of immense challenges. She stays true to her values and refuses to give up on her mission. And, thanks to you, neither are we.

There are more stories to tell than we have pages in our newsletter. There are more wicked advancements on the horizon. The future of health care is closer than you think.

With appreciation,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Allie'.

**Allie Young**  
CEO, KGH Foundation



# TRANSFORMING DIABETES CARE, ONE TEXT AT A TIME

An innovative initiative to support Type 1 diabetes made possible by donors is transforming care for children across the region



Navigating type 1 diabetes is an exhausting journey, requiring constant vigilance, split-second decisions, and access to timely medical advice. For parents managing the condition for their child, the stakes are even higher. Between quarterly doctor visits, parents face a mountain of choices about insulin levels, pump settings, and blood sugar management. Unfortunately, most learning initially comes through trial and error, tantrums, and tears.

Project IMPACT (Including Messaging for Patient and Care Teams) is a groundbreaking initiative, originally launched at Vernon Jubilee Hospital, that transforms diabetes care by connecting families and clinicians through secure SMS text messaging. Its remarkable success has resulted in expansion to Kelowna, Kamloops, and Penticton, made possible by the generosity of donors to the KGH Foundation, Royal Inland Hospital Foundation (Kamloops), and South Okanagan Similkameen Medical Foundation (Penticton).

"At its core, type 1 diabetes care is a shared effort between families and clinicians," explains Dr. Eiko Waida, Vernon Pediatrician and Medical Lead of Project IMPACT. "We needed a way for

families to access their care team quickly and efficiently while improving clinician workflow."

"The incidence of type 1 diabetes is rising, and it's a chronic disease with lifelong implications. Project IMPACT allows families to connect with their health teams in a way that reduces hospitalizations, enhances wellness, and optimizes clinician work time so they can help more patients. It's a small change with transformative impact," adds Waida.

Project IMPACT brings together a multi-disciplinary team of pediatricians, dietitians, and nurses to create an upstream solution to a growing health care challenge. Families can now consult with their care teams in real time, easing the burden of managing complex diabetes decisions alone. Indeed, the results have been astonishing. In Vernon, the program

reduced the average hospital stay for newly diagnosed pediatric patients with type 1 diabetes from four days to just 0.6 days. IMPACT is significantly reducing health costs, including a reduction in Emergency room visits, but most importantly, it's enhancing patient wellness and hopefully saving a few kiddo's tears as well.

"This program has been a game changer," shares Debbie, a mother whose son was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. "Having direct access to the care team has made managing diabetes less overwhelming for our family."

The innovative Project IMPACT is breaking down barriers, empowering families, and redefining what quality diabetes care can look like. With connection comes better care, and with better care, a brighter future for families with children diagnosed with type 1 diabetes.

**WAYS TO GIVE:** Interested in supporting the future of health care? Consider leaving a legacy gift in your Will. Learn more about planned giving at [kghfoundation.com/planned-giving](https://kghfoundation.com/planned-giving) or contact us at [info@kghfoundation.com](mailto:info@kghfoundation.com) or 250-862-4438.



#### CAMPAIGN UPDATE

## THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

“Unlimited...  
together we're unlimited.”

These powerful words from the movie *Wicked*, embody a profound truth: when we unite with a shared vision, there are no limits to what we can accomplish. Many of us were captivated this winter by *Wicked*, a new twist on a beloved tale whose lessons ring true even to this day. Much like Dorothy's journey in the original *Wizard of Oz*, the evolution of Kelowna General Hospital (KGH) from a small community facility to a leading, nationally recognized centre of excellence has been

driven by courage, collaboration, and an unwavering determination to push boundaries and redefine possibilities.

In many ways it has been your generosity that has built the 'yellow brick road' that's transformed KGH into a regional hub for advanced medical care. The next step on this path has now become clear and it is a big one: surgical excellence.

Last year alone, patients residing in the Interior Health region underwent over 4,500 emergency and scheduled surgeries elsewhere in the province. It's no surprise

the majority of these took place in the lower mainland. While significant, this number would be much higher if not for donor-driven advancements that have redefined care at KGH. Indeed, when we work together, we can and do accomplish big things. This past decade, your support for investments in state-of-the-art surgical technologies like the hybrid operating room (2015), electrophysiology (2019), interventional radiology (2021), and the gynecologic-surgical oncology program (2024) have pushed the limits and redefined what's possible at KGH.

The story of KGH's growth and advancement



Dr. Wiesenthal and his fellow clinicians during a medical procedure at KGH

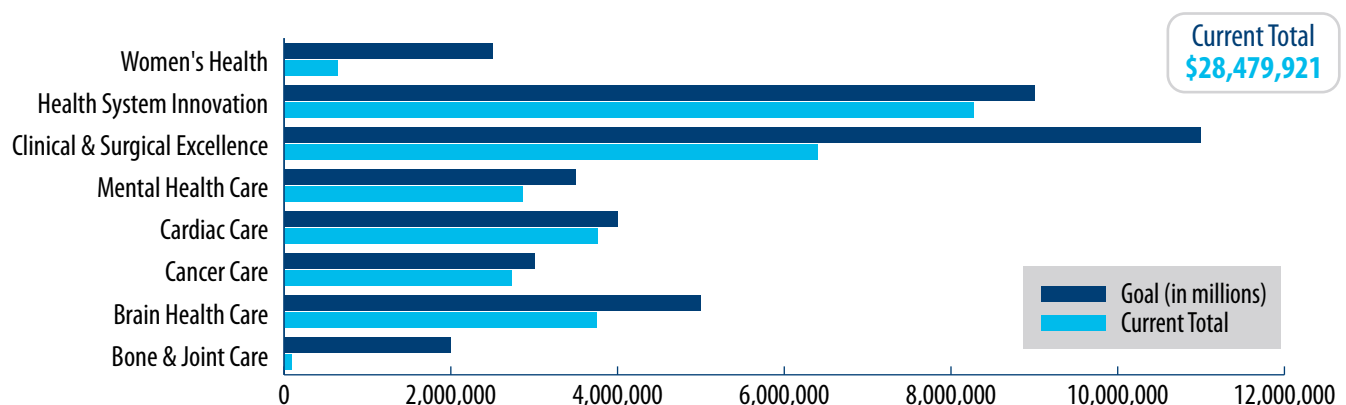
is far from over—its pages are still being written, with each chapter revealing new opportunities to redefine health care excellence. With cutting-edge advancements in surgical excellence, including robotic-assisted technologies and emerging solutions to treat women's cancers on the horizon for KGH, the hospital is poised to become a world-class centre of surgical excellence.

This spring, the KGH Foundation will launch the next chapter of our *Closer to home than you think* campaign. The multi-year, \$40 million fundraising commitment that promises to help usher in a new era of health care is our most ambitious ever. Thanks to your incredible generosity, we're already 71% of the way towards achieving this vision. Building off the HUGE success of last year's push to fund advancements

in Cancer Care, 2025 will see the continued focus on clinical and surgical excellence at KGH, the region's primary referral hospital serving communities across BC's southern interior.

Advancing clinical excellence at KGH will not only eliminate or significantly reduce the need for patients to travel to the Lower Mainland for care but will also introduce best-in-class technologies that radically improve the patient experience through their precision and minimally invasive nature. This includes the transformative opportunity to bring in robotic-assisted surgery to our local hospital, the next step in elevating KGH's standing as a world-class hospital in the Southern Interior of BC.

## Closer to Home Than You Think – Campaign Update







## Why it Matters

As our region and the complexity of patient needs continues to grow, so too does the demand for advanced surgical care. State-of-the-art surgical techniques and technologies can mean the difference between life and death, recovery and prolonged illness, or functional independence and long-term disability. Focusing on the acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment keeps our patients close to home while delivering vital benefits.

“Robotic-assisted surgery allows us to remove a patient’s tumor with greater precision while reducing the risk of cancer recurrence and spread”, explains Dr. Joshua Wiesenthal, KGH’s Head of Urology. “These minimally invasive techniques also mean that our patients suffer less pain, fewer complications, faster recovery, and an overall better quality of life.”

No one is more excited about the possibilities on the horizon than KGH’s Chief of Surgery, and Thoracic and Foregut Surgeon, Dr. Maurice Blitz.

“These advancements have broad applications across many disciplines—oncology, cardiovascular, gynecology, urology, and trauma surgery,” shares Dr. Blitz. “The integration of such technologies at KGH will further solidify the hospital’s reputation for clinical excellence while ensuring patients across the region have access to the most effective care available.”

## A World-Class Hospital

Investments in advanced surgical technologies will not only meet immediate patient needs but will also establish our hospital as a centre of innovation and excellence.

“KGH is the regional hub for health care, providing essential services to hundreds of thousands of residents in the Interior,” says KGH Foundation CEO, Allison Young. “But the reality is, staying at the forefront of surgical innovation is only possible because of the extraordinary generosity of our donors. Advanced surgical technologies come with significant costs—well beyond what public funding can provide—but they also bring transformative benefits: less invasive procedures, faster recoveries, and better outcomes for our friends, families, and neighbors.”

“This is life-changing care that will touch all of us at some point in our lives,” adds Young. “We rely on the support of our community to ensure KGH can continue to provide world-class health care right here at home, when it matters most.”

Many of the advanced surgical technologies donors are making possible at KGH have become the standard of care in urban centres such as Toronto, Vancouver, and the US. These tools also help KGH attract and retain leading surgical talent.

“KGH has a long history of embracing innovation to meet the growing needs of our community” shares Dr. Blitz. “These investments will help ensure our hospital is positioned at the forefront of surgical innovation, delivering care that meets or exceeds national and international benchmarks.”

## Next Chapter: Unlimited Potential

The Central Okanagan area is fast becoming one of Canada’s most dynamic places to live, and the opportunity for KGH to transform outcomes for patients across the region is closer to home than you think. The need for advanced surgical technologies at KGH marks the next step in ensuring residents of the interior have access to world-class surgical care. Technologies such as robotic-assisted surgery and other innovations are key to advancing excellence, attracting top surgical talent, and solidifying KGH as a leader in health care innovation.

The next chapter in this journey begins now. Thank you for building this road with us, for dreaming big, and for believing in the unlimited potential of health care at KGH. Together, we’re not just building a better hospital—we’re creating a future where every patient can receive the care they need, close to home.

Because when it comes to health care, there’s no place like home.



# PHILANTRHO-PICS

Over the past six months, we've had the privilege of celebrating with our incredible supporters at events that truly put the FUN in fundraising. While we couldn't include photos of everyone, this spread showcases just a glimpse of the generosity and community spirit driving our mission to bring world-class health care closer to home. To all who have supported us—thank you for making an impact and inspiring others along the way!



Neurologist Dr. Daryl Wile and his wife, Registered Dietician Erin Wile at Plates for Parkinson's



Barry Humphreys and his son Doug Humphreys chatting at Plates for Parkinson's



Chef Gatchi and a student from the Okanagan Collage Culinary Arts Program pose for the camera at Plates for Parkinson's



Guests in their best "Miami" style at Plates for Parkinson's



Thumbs-up during the 2024 Wilden Wild Run



A young family crosses the finish line of the 2024 Wilden Wild Run





JoeAnna's House staff and volunteers pose together at the 2024 Volunteer Gala



2024 Winner of the Barbie Ross Service Award, Jeanne Elder, celebrates with KGH Foundation staff, Amanda Walker and Jamie Russell



JoeAnna's House volunteers Maria MacDonnell and Clare Mallow enjoy a welcome mocktail at the 2024 Volunteer Gala



Girls just wanna have fun! Volunteers Eren Henderson, Sibongile Walker, and Icic Jost enjoy the photobooth at the 2024 Volunteer Gala



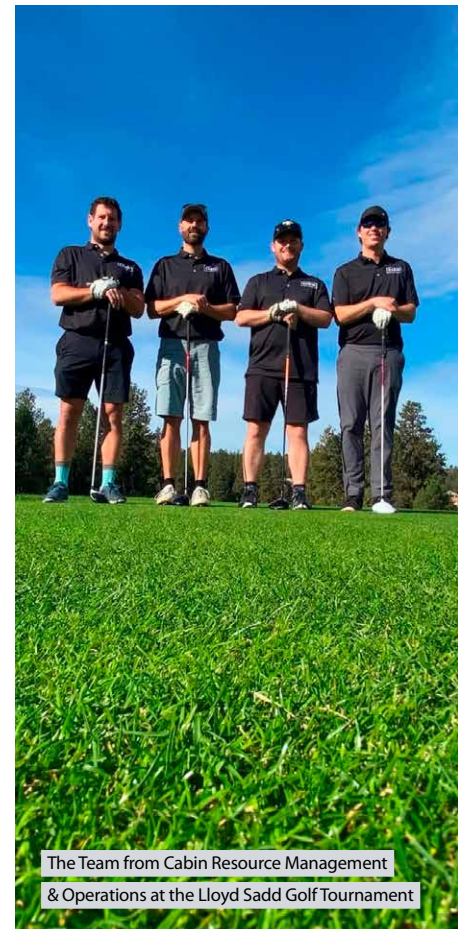
Lu Kapp, Kim Humphreys, and Dave Montpetit at the Spirit of Hope Fashion Show



Attendees dressed up for Rock the Foundation



Michael J. Ballingall (Big White) with Mayor Tom Dyas, Steve Thompson and friends at Rock the Foundation



The Team from Cabin Resource Management & Operations at the Lloyd Sadd Golf Tournament



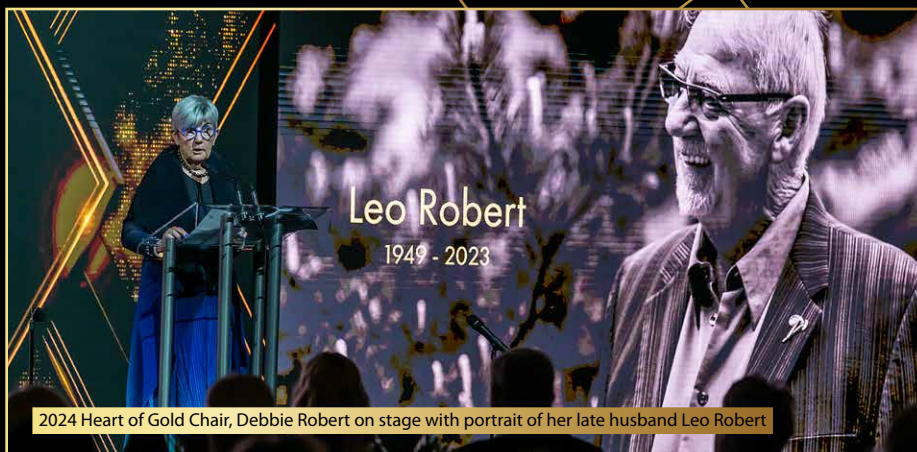
A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

# HEART OF GOLD GALA, 2024

In September, our iconic Heart of Gold Gala raised a record-breaking \$2,075,925 to advance excellence and innovation in surgical oncology at Kelowna General Hospital. Thank you to everyone who supported this impactful and unforgettable evening! An additional huge thank you to presenting sponsor, the Thomas Alan Budd Foundation, and to the Heart of Gold volunteer committee who transformed the KF Aerospace Centre for Excellence into a memorable event.



Retired Montreal Canadiens, Carey Price and his wife, Fashion Entrepreneur, Angela Price



2024 Heart of Gold Chair, Debbie Robert on stage with portrait of her late husband Leo Robert



Dragon's Den Lane Merrifield and wife Amanda



Heart of Gold Emcee and Global TV News Anchor, Chris Gailus with Auctioneer, Crystal Campbell and Heart of Gold Committee member, Lindsay-Anne Dow



2019 Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame Inductee and Founder of KF Aerospace, Barry Lapointe



Heart of Gold 2024 Committee (L to R) - Kim Mckergow, Dina Honke, Lynn Archibald, Gail Plecash, Courtney Macrae, Marisa Ryan, Marilyn Scott, Sarah Wallace, Sandy Dawson, and Kristi Wensley



Dallas Stober hugs her father, Ken Stober, after the transformational gift announced by the Stober Family





Heart of Gold Committee Member Dina Honke and her husband George Honke



Urologic Surgeon, Dr. Joshua Weisenthal speaks with the Heart of Gold Gala presenting sponsor, Tom Budd



Ken Stober and Yvonne Coelho attend the 2024 Heart of Gold Gala



## Winter Wonderland

JoeAnna's House

This past December, MNP Place was filled with holiday magic and community spirit as the 2nd annual Winter Wonderland raised \$66,427 for JoeAnna's House. Huge thanks to all who supported, including title sponsor Prestige Hotels and Resorts.



Kelowna Rockets player Owen Folstrom, skates with the little ones at MNP Place during Winter Wonderland 2024



Winter Wonderland Sponsor, Save-On-Foods, ensuring snacks are ready for all guests



Members of the Crowe Mackay staff handing out supplies for the Build a Snowman activity



Even Santa attended Winter Wonderland!



**JoeAnna's  
House**  
Better together.

#### JOEANNA'S HOUSE UPDATE

## 'WOOD' YOU BELIEVE IT'S BEEN 5 YEARS?

### Rooted and ready to grow...

On November 25, 2025, JoeAnna's House marked five incredible years of providing comfort, connection, and a home for more than 2,700 families (to date) when they needed it most. The traditional five-year anniversary gift is wood, symbolizing strength, growth, and a solid foundation—qualities that resonate deeply with the expansion plans for JoeAnna's House to help meet the growing demand for its services.

More than a building, JoeAnna's House has become a home away from home for out-of-town families while their loved ones receive care at KGH. But demand has quickly outpaced its 20-room capacity. Over the last 15 months, the home has been operating with a constant waitlist, leaving over 1,000 families unable to access this vital resource.

The KGH Foundation is currently fundraising \$5.3 million to grow JoeAnna's House by 10 new guest family rooms to ensure more families can stay together when they need it most. This expansion represents the gift of growth, directly addressing the urgent need to reduce the waitlist and extend support to more families in crisis.

Families like Brad and Carol Howard...



SCAN QR CODE TO  
WATCH BRAD'S  
FULL VIDEO STORY

Brad Howard was relieved to stay at JoeAnna's House this past summer, where he found the strength to be the best caregiver he could to his wife, Carol

## Finding Sanctuary Cultivates Strength

When Carol first had to undergo a cancer operation at KGH, Brad applied to stay at JoeAnna's House but unfortunately, he couldn't get a room due to the waitlist. During Carol's next hospital visit after experiencing complications, Brad was finally able to stay at JoeAnna's House and got to experience firsthand the sanctuary it provides.

"There's a lot of people here now, all of them with various stories and situations that are made so much better because they're allowed to be here with their loved ones at JoeAnna's House," Brad shares.

Being steps away from KGH meant everything to Brad, giving him the ability to be at Carol's side at a moment's notice. More importantly, JoeAnna's House provided Brad with a space to rest, recharge, and gather his strength during her recovery.

"You need a place to hide," Brad explains. "Sometimes you hear or see something going sideways, and you need somewhere to go. This home allowed me to be the best and strongest version of myself when Carol needed me most."





Darlene Haslock (JoeAnna's House Director), Kayla Vannieuwenhuizen (former JoeAnna's House guest), her daughter Hattie (KGH NICU baby who's now thriving), and Jessie Billey (KGH Foundation) all celebrated at Winter Wonderland



The new expansion on JoeAnna's House will build an additional ten family rooms where the parking lot currently sits

## Winter Wonderland Finds a Larger Home

The expansion campaign has already inspired overwhelming community support of JoeAnna's House. The largest fundraiser for the home, Winter Wonderland, was such a success in its first year that it outgrew the original venue and moved inside to MNP Place for 2024. The event raised an incredible \$66,427 for the operation and expansion of the home.

The magic of the season was witnessed throughout the event this past December, which included ice skating, holiday crafts and games, cookie decorating, a seasonal market, and entertainment.

Media sponsor Pattison brought energy to the event, Save-On-Foods kept guests fueled for a day of festive fun, and vendors showcased a vibrant holiday market.

Volunteers hosted activities for all ages, while Santa and his elves delighted families with photo opportunities, and Rockets players joined in the skating excitement. Winter Wonderland's success was made possible by generous sponsors and volunteers, including title sponsor Prestige Hotels and Resorts.

"I was over the moon to see so much joy, merry making, and generosity at Winter Wonderland," shares Santa Claus. "Seeing the community come together to support JoeAnna's House fills my heart, my spirit, and, of course, my nice list!"

## Branching Out: Together, We Grow.

As JoeAnna's House celebrates five years of transforming lives, the need for growth has never been more pressing. We are calling on the community to join in giving the gift of wood and construction, helping to meet the urgent demand for more rooms. With continued generosity and the success of events like Winter Wonderland, this expansion will do more than add space—it will provide the capacity to offer comfort, connection, and hope to families facing their hardest moments.

At JoeAnna's House, growth is about more than bricks and mortar, it's about expanding the compassion and care that make it a sanctuary. Together, we can ensure no family is left without the support they need when it matters most.

Together, we grow.

**5 Years**

**Ways to Give:** To support the expansion project and to help more families in need access JoeAnna's House, visit [joannashouse.com/expansion](http://joannashouse.com/expansion) or contact us at [info@kgfoundation.com](mailto:info@kgfoundation.com) or 250-862-4438.

# WITH EARNEST HEARTS AND BUSY HANDS

Local RBC and RBC Dominion Securities staff are redefining corporate giving



RBC and RBC Dominion Securities staff volunteering in style at the 2024 Heart of Gold Gala

In the Okanagan and surrounding areas, many local organizations generously support health care at the community level. Yet, some, like RBC and its wealth management division, RBC Dominion Securities, take it further—making philanthropy a core part of their culture.

Since 1990, the financial institutions have generously contributed over \$700,000 to the KGH Foundation to help transform health care. But it's the way they incentivize staff volunteerism that makes them stand out even more; a unique incentive that sees RBC match every hour a staff member volunteers with a \$25 gift to their charity of choice – up to a maximum of \$625! This initiative reflects a shared commitment and inspires a culture of giving.

Because the power of this incentive lies deep within the staff themselves. The consistency and enthusiasm of their presence at KGH Foundation venues and events over the years has made them feel like part of the family. From leading the volunteer efforts at our signature gala, to answering phones on

our annual Day of Giving, fundraising for our Homebase Charity Slo-Pitch Tournament, and serving coffee at KGH Foundation's coffee shop—the Perking Lot, they do not just give time—they earnestly embrace giving back.

At least 20 RBC volunteers have helped carry every Heart of Gold gala since the inaugural event, contributing greatly to the success of this key fundraiser over the last few decades. In addition, Kristi Wensley (RVP Associate, Okanagan Kootenays Market, RBC Royal Bank) and Marisa Ryan (Associate, RBC Dominion Securities) serve on the Heart of Gold planning committee, dedicating countless hours and sweat equity to help the event raise millions.

Other members of the RBC team have also supported families in need staying at JoeAnna's House through the Share-A-Meal program, providing nourishing home cooked meals to those who need them most.

The team from RBC Dominion Securities, volunteer once per month at the Perking Lot,

the beloved coffee shop at KGH that runs on the generosity of volunteers. RBC Dominion Securities staff have contributed over 1,000 volunteer hours at the Perking Lot!

A number of RBC executives have leant their expertise, leadership and guidance on the Board of Directors and various major gift campaigns. Currently these include Ray Warren (Vice President Commercial Financial Services) a member of the Closer to Home Than You Think Campaign Cabinet, and Patrick Ng (Investment Advisor) who serves on the KGH Foundation's Board of Directors, Campaign Cabinet, and Planned Giving Committee.

RBC Kelowna and RBC Dominion Securities embody what it means to be true partners in philanthropy. Their contributions go far beyond financial support; they bring heart, hands, and expertise to everything they do. Their partnerships demonstrates that corporate philanthropy is not only about writing cheques—it is also about rolling up sleeves and making a difference.



“

I feel it is important to support those going through what I, and Harriette went through with my cardiac surgery.”

Shonu Ghosh,  
Grateful Patient

Harriette and Shonu Ghosh's full circle story demonstrates how donor funded equipment can create a ripple effect of generosity through patients

## PATIENT STORY

# GRATEFUL IS OUR WORD FOR THANK YOU

## Shonu and Harriette Ghosh's Inspiring Story

Showing gratitude is a way of life for Shonu and Harriette Ghosh. Sitting with the couple, their serene and kind demeanor reveals little of the struggles they've endured in recent years: a cancer diagnosis, the loss of a parent and a sister, and significant cardiac surgery. Despite these challenges, their hearts remain open, radiating gratefulness and generosity.

"In the Bengali community, they did not originally have a word for 'thank you' says Shonu. "They only had the word 'grateful'. And throughout my life, I have tried to find ways to be grateful."

Born in Bangladesh, Shonu moved to Canada with Harriette in 1975, settling in Kelowna in 2004. Over the years, the Ghosh's became well known in the community for their extensive volunteerism and inspiring generosity. But in 2023, their giving hearts faced a literal test

when Shonu required a triple bypass and valve replacement surgery.

Luckily, Shonu was able to undergo this surgery at KGH. This was made possible by donations to the \$12 million Be a Lifesaver campaign which equipped the Interior Heart & Surgical Centre at KGH with some of the most advanced cardiovascular equipment and operating environments available. These state-of-the-art tools enable surgeons to perform critical procedures close to home, including the life-saving surgery Shonu received.

As his heart healed, Shonu set two goals. The first was to grow stronger—he and Harriette often reach 10,000 steps before 10 a.m.—and the second was to give back to the hospital that saved his life. Once they were settled, the couple made a heartfelt gift to the KGH Foundation in support of Cardiac Care. With

both goals achieved, Shonu still decided to further his impact and began volunteering in the cardiac wing at KGH— this in addition to all his other volunteering efforts given to various Interior Health associated facilities.

So Shonu started to sit down with patients and their families to guide them through their emotions and fears as they navigate cardiac surgery and recovery. As a pastor, this form of care and compassion comes naturally to him.

"I volunteer and give because I am grateful," states Shonu. "I feel it is important to support those going through what I, and Harriette, went through with my cardiac surgery."

The Ghosh's generosity serves as a powerful reminder that gratitude and giving back can not only heal hearts but transform lives. Because, in the end, giving truly changes everything.

**Volunteer:** To learn more about volunteer opportunities with the KGH Foundation, visit [www.kghfoundation.com/volunteer](http://www.kghfoundation.com/volunteer) or contact us at [info@kghfoundation.com](mailto:info@kghfoundation.com) or 250-862-4438.



Palliative Care Services and Hospice House team members- Nicole Wasyliuk, Team Leader; Cathryn Goodman, Manager; and Kristine Woronoski, Nurse, in the welcoming entryway that greets guests into the house

## CENTRAL OKANAGAN HOSPICE HOUSE

# ENSURING A PEACEFUL FINAL CHAPTER

## Central Okanagan Hospice House's Legacy of Compassion and Care

The end of life is a subject no one wishes to face, yet it's a story we all must write at some point. For patients and families at the Central Okanagan Hospice House, this chapter is often marked by profound emotional and physical challenges. Families sit at bedsides, trying to provide comfort while navigating their own grief. Patients confront the weight of their final days, yearning for peace and dignity.

"Our patients and their families are going through some of the hardest moments of their lives," shares Cathryn Goodman, Manager- Palliative Care Services and Hospice House for the Central Okanagan. "Our mission is to provide them with a space where those moments are met with care, comfort, and compassion."

Since opening its doors in 2008, the House has been a sanctuary for over 6,000 patients during life's final chapter. Thanks to the generosity of donors, it offers more than exceptional medical care—it creates an environment filled with warmth, peace, and dignity. The Hospice team goes above and beyond to honor patient's cultural and religious preferences, including Indigenous practices such as smudging and other deeply meaningful rituals

“

Our mission is to provide them with a space where those moments are met with care, comfort, and compassion.”

**Cathryn Goodman**  
Manager - Palliative Care Services  
and Hospice House



## Transforming the Space, Transforming the Experience

Donations to the KGH Foundation have enabled recent renovations and upgrades to create a beautiful space that helps families focus on what matters most: their time together.

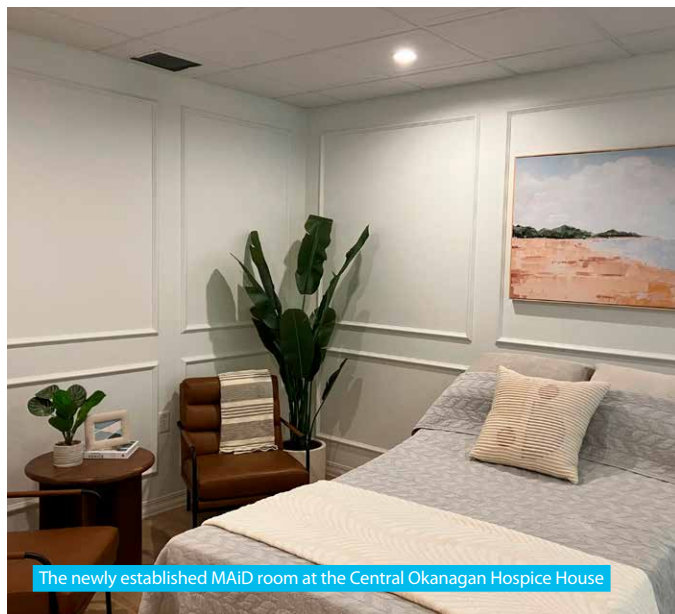
A standout example is the newly renovated Patient and Family Lounge. Once a functional but uninspired room, it has been transformed into a welcoming and private space for families to gather and support one another.

"This lounge has become a haven," says Goodman. "It's where families can share memories, make funeral plans, or simply sit together with a cup of tea. It allows them to step away from the bedside to regroup and reset as they need."

## Empowering Choices with the MAiD Room

Thanks to the generosity of KGH Foundation donors, the creation of a dedicated Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) room at Hospice has become a profoundly impactful addition. Thoughtfully designed with new furniture, soothing colors, and calming décor, this space offers more than comfort—it empowers patients to make deeply personal decisions about their final chapter in a setting that honors their dignity and choice.

For patients, the serene environment provides a sense of calm and refuge during an intensely emotional time. It is a space where they can reflect, make decisions, and feel truly seen and valued in their final moments. For families, the MAiD room transforms a potentially clinical and overwhelming experience into one of compassion and grace.



The newly established MAiD room at the Central Okanagan Hospice House



## A Legacy of Compassion

The generosity of donors has shaped more than just a care facility—it has created a sanctuary where life's final chapter is written with grace, dignity, and love. By focusing on the emotional needs of patients and their families, every improvement made possible by donor support serves as a powerful reminder that even in life's most difficult moments, beauty and compassion can bring comfort and peace.

## Enhancing Comfort, One Detail at a Time

Thanks to the generosity of donors, the KGH Foundation has also been able to fund various enhancements that make a tangible difference in the care provided:

- **Caregiver Comforts:** A tea and coffee service for family members offers a small but meaningful comfort during stressful periods.
- **New Oxygen Concentrators:** Increasing capacity ensures every patient receives uninterrupted care, as the House was previously running short on these machines.
- **Mattress Replacements:** Improved mattresses guarantee patients' comfort and prevent pressure-related issues.
- **Enhanced Entertainment:** Modern televisions provide a small but meaningful distraction for patients and their families.
- **Professional Development:** Ongoing education for the palliative care team ensures staff are equipped with the latest knowledge and strategies.

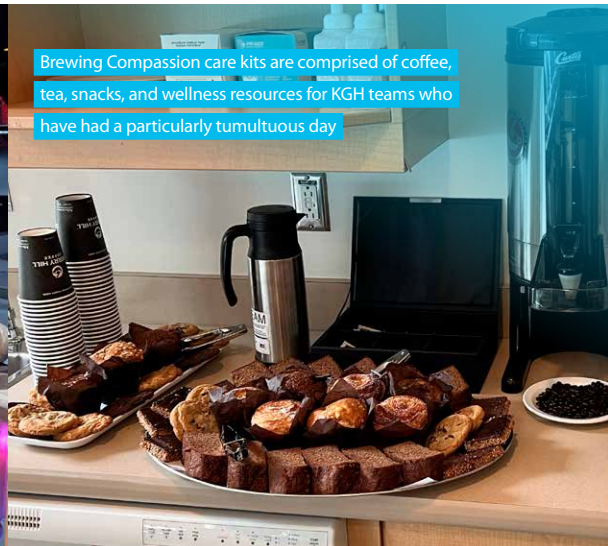
"These updates may seem small, but they're life-changing for our patients and their families," shares Goodman. "For patients confined to bed, something as simple as a TV becomes a window to the world, offering distraction, connection, and moments of normalcy. These details remind patients and families that they are seen, valued, and cared for in ways that go beyond the clinical. It's about making their final chapter as meaningful and dignified as possible."

# BREWING COMPASSION

## Care Packages for our Health Care Heroes



The New Leaf Physiotherapy team often works in the public health sector, and has supported six Brewing Compassion events



Brewing Compassion care kits are comprised of coffee, tea, snacks, and wellness resources for KGH teams who have had a particularly tumultuous day

Not all heroes wear capes. At Kelowna General Hospital (KGH), they wear scrubs and masks, and their hard workdays aren't just stressful—they can be traumatic. These health care heroes carry unimaginable emotional weight, facing life-and-death decisions daily. But even superheroes need care, and sometimes, all it takes is a small gesture to restore their strength and remind them how much they are appreciated.

Unfortunately, the constraints of public health care funding leave little room for simple comforts such as a cup of coffee or a sweet treat on a brutal day. That's where Brewing Compassion steps in. Launched last year, this initiative is dedicated to supporting the emotional well-being of front-line health care workers at KGH, providing them with tokens of gratitude and moments of relief when they need it most.

When a team faces a particularly jarring emergency or loss, leaders can request a Brewing Compassion care kit for their department. These kits include coffee, tea, pastries, mindfulness supplies like coloring books, and wellness resources from KGH Spiritual Care, providing

a chance for the team to pause, regroup, and find solidarity in their shared experiences.

"At its core, Brewing Compassion is about acknowledging the emotional toll these events take on our staff," shares Lindsay Taberner, Executive Director of Clinical Operations at KGH. "By offering simple but meaningful gestures, we remind them that their well-being matters just as much as the patients they care for."



Brewing Compassion is about acknowledging the emotional toll these events take on our staff."

**Lindsay Taberner,**  
Executive Director of Clinical  
Operations, KGH

Supported entirely by donations to the KGH Foundation, Brewing Compassion would not exist without the generosity of the community. One dedicated supporter is Rob Ewanuk and

his team at New Leaf Physiotherapy who work in both private and public health care and are familiar with the challenges seen on the front lines. Last year, New Leaf funded six Brewing Compassion events, reaching over 120 health care workers.

"This program is our way of giving back to the people who care for our community every day," Rob explains. "When a friend is struggling, we bring them coffee or a treat. This is our chance to extend that same caring tradition with our fellow health care workers on their hardest days."

For KGH's health care heroes, these simple acts of kindness become moments of connection and strength. Over a cup of tea or a snack, teams can process emotions, reconnect with colleagues, and find the resilience to continue their vital work.

Brewing Compassion helps ensure these extraordinary individuals feel supported. Because sometimes, even heroes need someone to care for them.





KGH dialysis patient David Leslie cycles through a virtual reality landscape during one of his dialysis sessions

## ADVANCING PATIENT CARE

# NEW HORIZONS

## Adventures in virtual reality for KGH dialysis patients

For dialysis patients, life often revolves around managing their condition, with significant impacts on their physical and emotional well-being. Spending three to five hours, three times a week, connected to a dialysis machine is often monotonous and exhausting. Now, thanks to an innovative program at Kelowna General Hospital (KGH), this experience is evolving into something more engaging and uplifting.

Donna Jansons, Program Director for Renal and Transplant Services, envisioned a way to optimize these appointments. “With so many hours spent in the chair, we wanted to improve the experience for patients—not just physically, but mentally and emotionally,” she explains.

Her vision led to the launch of a state-of-the-art virtual reality (VR) exercise program for KGH’s renal dialysis patients, the first of its kind in North America. This immersive Cycling Through Dialysis program allows patients to pedal using stationary cycle equipment, while wearing VR headsets so

it looks as though they are biking through calming virtual landscapes — all from their dialysis chairs!

The light exercise distracts patients to help pass the time, combats fatigue — a common side effect of dialysis, and improves blood circulation. Donations to the KGH Foundation purchased the innovative equipment.

“Virtual reality makes the long hours of treatment so much better,” shares dialysis patient David Leslie. “It gives me something to look forward to and makes exercising easier. I now feel happier and less tired when I leave the clinic.”

This initiative also presents an opportunity to explore how VR can enhance patient care. The second phase of the project, conducted in partnership with the University of British Columbia and Interior Health Research, will evaluate the program’s impact on patients’ physical and mental well-being. The findings from this research will help determine

whether the program could be expanded to other Interior Health initiatives.

“This isn’t just about exercise,” Jansons emphasizes. “It’s about creating moments of joy and expanding the horizons of patients with a life-limiting chronic disease. Additionally, research may provide IH Digital Health with valuable insights into the potential role of VR in improving care across a range of health care environments. I’m so grateful to our renal team and all the KGH volunteers for their help with this equipment trial.”

By blending cutting edge technology, research, and compassion, the Cycling Through Dialysis program is reshaping the dialysis experience and redefining what’s possible in patient-centered care.

“The impact has been incredible to witness,” adds Alyssa Dietrich, Patient Care Coordinator for the Hemodialysis Clinic. “Patients are leaving the clinic feeling more positive, energized, and uplifted.”



# (w)healthy Podcast

## Discover the Stories Behind the Impact

Curious about sleep hygiene, youth resiliency, ketamine treatment, or stroke prevention?

As a valued supporter of the KGH Foundation, you already play a vital role in transforming health care in our community. Now, we invite you to go deeper and explore the stories, knowledge, and innovations that shape our community. Through expert insights and storytelling, we hope to empower and inspire listeners to live their (w)healthiest lives.

Our (w)healthy podcast explores several dimensions of health, taking listeners behind the curtain with local leading experts including KGH surgeons, dieticians, mental health experts, people with lived experience, and many more.



Tune in on your favourite platform  
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